

REFLECTION AND REMEMBRANCE: 9-11-01
A READER'S THEATRE TRIBUTE
DEVELOPED BY MIKE THOMAS

*This piece was developed through accounts collected from Kentuckians.
There are four male and four female voices used in the production.*

*During the opening sequence the voices will almost overlap to convey the
bustle of a normal day's activities. This continues until Woman 4 says
"Twenty seven minutes later, the first hijacked plane hit the North Tower."*

W1: I overslept.

M1: It was the beginning of a workday; plodding through...

W2: We were in Istanbul, Turkey, and it was four o'clock in the afternoon.

M2: I was helping to restore an old house we had bought.

W3: I had an appointment with a young Chinese woman at her campus
apartment.

M3: I was on the treadmill watching "Good Morning, America."

W4: My son was overdue at preschool.

M4: The sun shone bright on this small Kentucky town...without a cloud
in the sky.

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W1: I frantically rushed to get out the door.

M1: Another caller with an insurance problem...nothing unusual.

W2: I was in the lobby fixing my continental breakfast.

M2: I was sitting in a lounge chair.

W3: It was a morning full of tasks I thought quite important at the time.

M3: I was in the kitchen listening to the “Bob and Tom Show,” almost out the door for a riding lesson.

W4: I gave birth to my son Jack at 8:18 a.m.

M4: I had just blown out the candles on my birthday cake...

W4: Twenty-seven minutes later, the first hijacked plane hit the North Trade Tower.

M4: Two women came in yelling.

W3: My university colleague from China burst into my office.

M3: I immediately dialed my parent’s phone number on Long Island.

W1: “Mom, do you know what’s going on?”

W2: “Who is this?” she asked, very annoyed.

W1: “It’s your daughter, turn on the TV.”

M1: Listening to the car radio between stops, I heard:

M2: The plane was a passenger, not a private.

W3: Another had crashed into the second Tower.

M4: A third plane hit the Pentagon.

W1: A fourth crashed into a field in Pennsylvania.

M3: The towers crumbled and fell.

W3: The day Manhattan melted.

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M1: There was no gradual awakening to what was going on;
instantaneously television and the Internet plunged us into a sea...

W2: Of grief,

M4: Sadness,

W4: And anger.

W1: We sat...

W1/M1/W3/M4: Four to a cube,

M3: Listening to the events unfold.

M2: In the flash of a stranger's camera there was nothing beautiful about
this day anymore.

W3: At first I thought it was just a stunt or something.

M3: It seemed so much like a movie.

W4: As if life had dropped into slow motion and you were suddenly
standing outside your body watching events, but not quite part of them.

M3: Boom!

W1: Clouds of fire!

M3: Boom!

W4: My head swirls with the flames.

M3: Boom!

W2: I clung to my husband, scared.

M1: Frightened by the thought of what else the day might bring.

W3: Suddenly I had to question everything around me.

W1: It seemed that part of the world had stopped.

M1: We live close to a major airport and the quiet, after the President ordered all air traffic to stop, was deafening.

W2: There was only the sound of the crickets.

M4: An eerie silence had settled over the town.

W3: The quiet was louder than any we had heard before.

M3: I began to wonder if this flick would have an end.

W4: We are all trying to smile a lot, as not to upset the children.

W3: We had lunch in a very somber atmosphere.

W2: Making idle conversation at a sidewalk café was difficult for all of us...

M2: I remember feeling...

W1: Hopeless.

M1: Angry.

W3: Frightened.

M3: Lost.

W4: We prayed.

M4: We cried.

ALL: We remained strong.

W2: Hoping against all hope that there were a multitude of survivors.

M4: The first thing I did was to put out a flag.

W4: As a teacher of 8-year-old third-graders, stoicism seemed important. Reading stories to them, having fun with math activities, and drawing helped us get through the day until we could go home to our families.

M3: Our complaisant bubble burst.

W2: But none of the others had a son in New York City and a daughter in Washington D.C. like I did.

M3: Two employees on business in Atlanta called:

M1/W1: Can we come home?

M3: Yes, yes!

ALL: Come home!

W4: I called my husband who was in Florida on business, "I wish you were here."

M3: "If you want me to, I can drive home," he responds.

W2: I was one of the thousands of stranded tourists.

M2: At the stoplight, I sense something is wrong. I look at the blue car next to me. A woman with long brown hair is crying.

W2: Finally my best friend took my hand and said...

W3: "They're all right."

W2: She could always read my thoughts.

W3: I watched the students, knowing that everything they had known had just changed forever.

W4: I wondered how I was going to explain this to my kids.

W2: Something terrible is happening in your country.

M2: It was a terrorist attack.

W1: Who? Why?

M3: The white hats/black hats thing doesn't even begin to touch what 9/11 was and is about.

M2: I never knew that I didn't know fear in my life until that day.

W3: Our sense of vulnerability was laid open like a fresh wound.

W4: As the soot, dirt and ash rained down...

M1: We became one nation.

W2: One family.

M3: One color.

W1: And one people.

M4: Having grown up in what was once rural Kentucky as a different-looking Japanese-American, I know what it is like to feel prejudice and a fair amount of discrimination.

W3: The world was here, too.

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W1: We're standing in a doorway with different paths to choose.

W4: Will we become a paranoid, isolationist nation?

W3: Or will we turn outward in an attempt to really understand?

M2: May all of us find comfort and strength in each other.

M1: And have faith that reason and goodness can overcome what seems so patently evil and nonsensical.

W4: My husband and I struggled over the next few hours, days, and weeks with jumbled emotions of one of the happiest days of our lives, mixed with extreme sorrow for those innocent lives that ended so tragically and needlessly.

W2: And I longed to be in my own home to mourn their loss.

M3: We all went to Mother of God's church for noon mass. Catholics and non-Catholics alike, to pray for our country and all involved.

W1: I stop in the church sanctuary. It is empty, except for the sunlight filtering in the window behind the altar. I sit down to soak in its radiance.

M2: I curl up in a fetal position, box of tissue at the ready.

W4: A personal horror surfaced when I thought of my three cousins...

M4: One a fire chief,

W1: Another a sergeant,

M3: And the last a police officer with the Emergency Services Unit Truck 2. Termed the First Responders.

W4: He is still there at Ground Zero.

M1: My mind still tries to wrap around the reality of that morning. The thing that often haunts me is that feeling of serenity I noticed just before I heard the world had fallen apart.

W3: And I wonder when I'll feel that way again.

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W1: I will never forget that day.

M2: Nor do I want to.

M1: Forever, I will remember the heat of the fire,

W3: The dust from the ash,

M4: The cries of the loved ones,

W4: And the feelings of helplessness that were expressed by so many.

W1: Sometimes people ask me if I knew anyone there and I say, "I knew everyone and so did you."

M3: My perspective on life, family and friends changed forever.

W2: Mercifully, the calls came through around midnight and both of my children and their families were safe.

M1: I spoke with my son and daughter-in-law as they stood in line to donate blood within hours of the incident.

W4: I begged them to leave the city. They refused.

M2: "We're New Yorkers," they told me.

W2: The reassurances we gave each other that night were invaluable.

M3: After several days of non-stop news, our listeners and we were saturated and exhausted, far from comforted. On Friday night we stopped the endless news reports and put on the music.

W1: I went home,

M2: Closed my eyes,

W4: And listened.

W3: Songs take on new meaning...

M4: Words have added weight....

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(The final portion of the script is created from a poem titled "Comfort" by Joanie DiMartino. As she reads, the chorus of voices will occasionally join her.)

JOANIE: So, I wrote...*(she begins to read)* "When the world asks

ALL: why

JOANIE: Flesh flies steel into steel and flesh,
When autumnal fires of war cause hands to be useless;
Fingers slipping off computer keyboards,
Your own nails brittle,
Fingertips

ALL: numb;

JOANIE: Take comfort under a Boutis quilt from France,
plump and soft with clusters of red baby's breath florets and green stems on
white cotton----colors of photosynthesis

ALL: and blood.

JOANIE: Spread over the legs of three women in a state building under
lock-down, who trace each stitch as Internet sites report carnage in real time.

ALL: We think of all the quilts we will make this year,

JOANIE: The vulnerability of work: Even Betsy Ross's flag was hand-
made." *(She finishes the poem.)*

JOANIE: With reflection, I found release.

M1: And among the rubble, our flag was placed high.

ALL: While the human spirit soared victoriously.